How to spot employee resistance to change.

More than 50% of all changes in organizations fail.

The primary reason for these failures is employee (and sometimes ownership's) resistance to change. How owners and managers handle resistance (employees and theirs) can create the difference between success and failure.

✓ The first step to dealing with resistance is being able to recognize it.

In-your-face criticism.

This is what we think of when we think about resistance.

Confusion

This is a way of keeping unpleasant news from disturbing the status quo. "If I don't understand it, it can't hurt me."

Immediate criticism.

Groucho Marx once sang, "Whatever it is -- I'm against it."

Even before people know the details, they object. It is almost as if they have created a shield to protect themselves. In their view, the best defense is a quick offense.

Denial

This is another way for people to protect themselves from things they don't want to see or hear. "I don't see a problem; therefore, it doesn't exist."

Malicious compliance.

People smile and appear to go along with the decision (without actually doing so). It is a way for employees to keep on doing what they believe is important, while placating their supervisors.

Sabotage

Employee's not-so-subtle way of stopping change.

Easy agreement.

Meaning that employees go along without much criticism. In this form of resistance, the employees truly do like the idea -- it's just that they simply haven't taken time to digest the implications.

Silence

It is always difficult to interpret silence, but sometimes it may be the only response people feel safe to use.

As you can see, there are many other, far more subtle forms of resistance than simple in-your-face yammering. But one thing is clear: People seldom resist just to make your life miserable.

It is important to remember that people resist new ideas to protect themselves. They may be overwhelmed or fear the consequences of the change.

Spotting resistance early gives you time to consider options that could transform opposition to change into outright support for it.

Why do People Fail to Change?

It isn't that people can't identify that they need to improve or change. It's obvious to most people that they need do things differently in their business and personal lives and they most often know *almost exactly* what needs to be changed.

What follows are the main reasons for "improvement" failure…

1. People don't really commit to the changes or improvements and set up a realistic plan to accomplish them. They give them lip (or mind) service never really committing to the hard work it takes.
2. People identify what they need to change but don't make room (or time) for the change in their business and personal lives. They don't *move* other things around to make room for the *things* that need to be changed.
3. People try to change too much to soon. They focus on an item that is impossible in the time frame or with the resources they have available.
4. People fail to identify the *real* area that needs to be changed. They focus on changing something that is only a part of, or symptom of, a bigger problem or area that needs to be addressed.
5. People try to change (the wrong things) for the wrong reasons. They are pressured from the outside and really don't want to change. *They are controlled by someone else's agenda!*
6. People can't say NO to (or get rid of) other people or things that keep them from accomplishing what they know they must to improve.
7. People *obsess* on what they want to change rather then looking at it realistically.
8. People fail to take *consistent and active actions*. They start and stop and loose any and all momentum they may have accomplished.

And possibly most importantly ... People do not set up a support system to make themselves *accountable* for accomplishing what they need to. They do not have, as Pinocchio did, a *"Jiminy Cricket"*.

It was Emerson who wrote - "I need someone to help me do, what I already can." Believe me… we all do. We all need a *help* to help us succeed.
It's important to interject here that this help can come from people close to you – though this is unusual.

Most times the people closest to you (spouses, parents, business associates, clergy etc) have their *own* agendas that keep them from *coaching* you properly. They can become a support system if you get them committed to your journey but they are, more times then not, to close to the situation to give dispassionate advice and *frankly* may even be what is holding you back.